
Title: Trial of C. Wolkoff [2]

Author: Velika Ne'Sveti

Blood poured across the floor of the Well of Souls as chaos broke free among the spectators. The dragon seemed to attack in all directions at once until it was finally led away from the guests and killed. Velika and Rune Artisem collected the warrior's things and awaited his return from the ethereal plane. Remembering suddenly that she had left some vitally important documents unfinished on her desk, Velika left the Well and returned to the Tribunal to finish her work while listening to the cheers of the spectators of the gladiator tournament.

Some time later, she smiled as she made her finishing flourish on another request for the arrest of William, Paladin of the Lost Order of Akalabeth. This one permitted her militia to arrest him at any time, and in any land. She knew that the mainlanders cared little for her word or her law, but she would not ask Nexus to arrest this man until she had protected him as much as she could. She stood from her desk and stretched. The balcony invited her and as she stepped into the bracing air, she mused sadly that she had missed half of

the festivities writing this document. A cheer from the crowd outside told her that the gladiator tournament was still underway, and if she hurried, she could watch a few of the bouts. She turned to leave when she heard the voices of Alucard and GreyPawn below her. They spoke in hushed voices and Velika could make little sense of their words. Grinning to herself, she decided to test the old sage's heart and whispered the words of power that transported her mere inches behind where he stood. The Emissary frowned, annoyed at the intrusion, while GreyPawn jumped in alarm. Laughing, Velika apologized for interrupting their conversation and moved past Alucard, mouthing "Save some for me" as she walked by. She heard his chuckle as she mounted the Well of Souls to watch the gladiators.

As she stood watching the fights, Rune Artisem strode solemnly into the cleared area.

"The Vice-Mayor has been murdered."

Startled looks met his announcement as the fighters ceased their struggle.

"I said, the Vice-Mayor has been murdered! Come, see, her corpse lies near the shore."

Frozen to the ground in shock, most didn't move, but Velika followed to see the scene. Alucard and

GreyPawn arrived at Kelila's corpse shortly afterwards to see Velika bent over the body.

"Velika, what have you done?"

The Magistrate stood, holding a ring in her hand in which several short, coarse, grey hairs were stuck, matted with blood. She looked at the corpse dispassionately and inspected several large gashes in the torso and legs.

"I have done nothing, Emissary. But look, see this ring? It is covered with strange hairs, no? I think this is not the ring of the Vice-Mayor. And these wounds....she was mauled by a wolf. I am certain of this."

GreyPawn stared at Velika in doubt. "I think she was murdered, not attacked by wild animals...and where were you when this happened?"

"You tell me when it happened, m'lord, I tell you where I was, no?"

GreyPawn looked at the corpse and the snow melting slightly still beneath it.

"It has happened just recently, I would guess shortly before we saw you near the Tribunal Hall."

"Ah, then I was inside the Tribunal working on some papers, no?"

At this both GreyPawn and Alucard frowned. They had been in front of the

Tribunal hall and saw her recall there. Confusion followed the frowns as GreyPawn spoke their thoughts.

“No, Velika, you could not have been in the Tribunal. We were there...we saw you recall to the spot just behind me, remember?” The Sage of Honesty continued to frown at the young woman. How could she possibly expect a lie like this to protect her? And why would she tell it to the two people who could easily refute her words?

“The Magistrate was with me at the time,” Alucard said firmly, staring at Velika.

Both GreyPawn and the Magistrate turned to look at the Emissary.

“But you were with me, Alucard, not her...”
“I was not with you, Alucard, you were speaking with the Sage. I was in the Tribunal Hall.”

Alucard stared firmly at GreyPawn and then Velika.
“Velika was with me at the time of this murder.”

As others began trickling in Velika said stubbornly,
“I was not with you Alucard, I was in the Tribunal Hall, working on my papers.”

Alucard scowled as he realized that everyone had heard her protestation. He asked Velika for the ring and began inspecting it. As the crowd realized what had happen, they all

began clamouring at once. Some thought that the Magistrate had killed the Vice-Mayor, others swore it was one of the Sages of Humility. The citizens of Caina fixated that it was obviously a wolf attack, clearing Velika's name, until the Magistrate proved that most mages, she included, could turn in to wolves, and did so before the entire assembly. One of the Handmaidens of Lilith, Ssin'urn swore revenge on any who could have done it and suggested that they all be put to death. Cerenje Wolkoff appeared and, after speaking with the spirits, declared that "Lum was to blame." GreyPawn suggested that Cerenje committed the murder and was placing blame on the Sages. Again the Sages of Humility protested their innocence. Ssin'urn noticed that Cerenje wore a ring similar to that found on Kelila's body and in her locket was a lock of very coarse, short grey hair. Convinced that she was the murderer, Ssin'urn threatened to kill the old woman and the Magistrate in retaliation. Velika scoffed at the threats and the suggestion, pointing out that Cerenje was no fewer than one hundred winters old, and as a mortal human, far too frail to have caused such wounds on the Vice-Mayor.

As the others argued these points she turned to Cerenje, recognition and concern marking her face.

“Sta jed vlkodlak,
Cerenje?”

“Da.”

Fear gripped Velika’s
heart as she nodded.

“Ne’Sveti vlkodlak?”

“Nyet, Vistani vlkodlak.”

Apparently relieved, Velika
remained quiet for the
remainder of the
argument, interjecting
only to keep the drow
from slaying her servant.

Treadeau and Rune
Artisem returned from
their conference as
Ssin’urn made her final
discovery. On Cerenje’s
arm was a long gash,
similar to those found on
Kelila’s body. She insisted
that a Necromancer look
at the marks, and Rune
complied. He inspected
them for a long time,
fascinated by what he
found.

“These are certainly
marks of a magical kind.
I believe they were made
in a ceremony of
binding.”

Cerenje spat on the
ground, “Bah, you
necromancers know nothing
of true magicks!”

“Then what is this, old
woman?” Rune asked,
while the drow spat her
derision at both the man
asking and the old crone
answering the questions.

“Answer him, Cerenje,”
Velika prompted. She
could no longer protect
her servant.

“This is a ritual of

binding, da. I call forth a
vlkodlak...a werewolf and
bind him to my wishes.
Then he comes here and
kills this psovati
blaznivy.”

Ssin’urn hissed as she
readied her katana. Blood
would pour from this old
crone’s corpse if she had
her way.

Velika stepped in front
of her and addressed the
crowd.

“Very well, I will take
this woman in to custody
and she will be tried for
her crimes. Cerenje,
follow me.”

Ssin’urn growled her
disapproval. “You will be
lenient with this wael
elg’caress. You will
pardon her.”

Velika looked calmly into
the irate face of the
drow. “She will be tried
for breaking our laws.
And I will not be
lenient...because she was
caught.”

Several of the spectators
followed Velika and her
prisoner into the
courthouse where the
trial began immediately,
despite the late hour and
Velika’s protest. She
swore in her court and
sat with the Mayor on
her right and the
Emissary on her left.
After charging her
former nursemaid with
the crime of murder,
Velika listened as Cerenje
claimed innocence based on
self-defense. Ssin’urn had
little to testify other
than the known facts
which Velika repeated for
the record.

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